

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (previously presented) An isolated DNA encoding a protein having neoxanthin cleavage activity, wherein said protein is selected from the group consisting of:
- (a) a protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:6;
 - (b) a protein encoded by a polynucleotide that hybridizes under highly stringent conditions with a DNA comprising a nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:5, wherein said highly stringent conditions are: hybridization in a solution containing 30% formamide, 6X SSC, 5X Denhardt's solution, and 100 μ g/ml denatured salmon sperm DNA at 37°C and washing in 0.1X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 60°C for 15 min; and
 - (c) a protein comprising an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

Claims 2-4 (canceled)

5. (previously presented) A transformed plant cell comprising the isolated DNA of claim 1.
6. (previously presented) A transgenic plant comprising the transformed plant cell of claim 5.
7. (previously presented) A transgenic plant which is an offspring or a clone of the transgenic plant of claim 6, wherein plant cells from said offspring or clone also contain the isolated DNA which encodes a protein having neoxanthin cleavage activity and said protein is selected from the group consisting of:
- (a) a protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:6;
 - (b) a protein encoded by a polynucleotide that hybridizes under highly stringent conditions with a DNA comprising a nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:5, wherein said highly stringent conditions are: hybridization in a solution containing 30% formamide, 6X

SSC, 5X Denhardt's solution, and 100 μ g/ml denatured salmon sperm DNA at 37°C and washing in 0.1X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 60°C for 15 min; and

(c) a protein comprising an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

8. (previously presented) The transgenic plant of claim 6, wherein the expression level of the isolated DNA encoding a protein having neoxanthin cleavage activity is increased compared to the expression level in the wild type of said transgenic plant.

9. (previously presented) The transgenic plant of claim 6, wherein the amount of abscisic acid is increased compared to the wild type of said transgenic plant.

10. (currently amended) The transgenic plant of claim 6, wherein tolerance to a stress selected from the group consisting of drought, high salt and low temperature stresses is increased compared to the wild type of said transgenic plant.

11. (previously presented) A propagation material for the transgenic plant of claim 6.

12. (previously presented) A vector comprising the DNA of claim 1.

13. (previously presented) A method for producing the transgenic plant comprising the isolated DNA of claim 1, comprising the steps of introducing said isolated DNA into a plant cell and regenerating a plant from the plant cell.

14. (currently amended) A method for increasing ~~stress~~ tolerance to a stress selected from the group consisting of drought, high salt and low temperature stresses in a plant, wherein said method comprises:

(a) introducing an isolated DNA encoding a protein having neoxanthin cleavage activity into a plant cell obtained from said plant;

- (b) expressing the isolated DNA in said plant cell; and
- (c) producing a plant from the plant cell that has increased stress tolerance.

Claims 15-16 (canceled)

17. (previously presented) The isolated DNA of claim 1, wherein said isolated DNA encodes a protein that is at least 99% identical to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

18. (previously presented) The isolated DNA of claim 1, wherein said isolated DNA encodes a protein that is identical to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

19. (previously presented) The method according to claim 14, wherein the isolated DNA encodes a protein having neoxanthin cleavage activity and said protein is selected from the group consisting of:

- (a) a protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:6;
- (b) a protein encoded by a polynucleotide that hybridizes under highly stringent conditions with a DNA comprising a nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:5, wherein said highly stringent conditions are: hybridization in a solution containing 30% formamide, 6X SSC, 5X Denhardt's solution, and 100 μ g/ml denatured salmon sperm DNA at 37°C and washing in 0.1X SSC, 0.1% SDS at 60°C for 15 min; and
- (c) a protein comprising an amino acid sequence that is at least 95% identical to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

20. (currently amended) The method according to claim 14 [[19]], wherein said stress is drought stress.

Claims 21-23 (canceled)